

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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“Marijuana Eradication Up for 7th Consecutive Year”

The number of Marijuana plants seized in Washington State has hit a record high this year at 135,323 plants. This is the 7th year in a row that record numbers have been removed statewide. This crop is conservatively valued at over \$270,000,000 dollars. Last year’s success is a credit to the hard work of the men and women of law enforcement statewide.

The top five (5) counties for domestic marijuana production were Chelan County with 37,086 plants, Grant County with 20,521 plants, King County with 16,809 plants, Yakima County with 16,206 plants, and Franklin County with 8,386 plants. The growing operations in eastern Washington were predominately outdoors. King County experienced an explosion of indoor grows in 2005, an eight fold increase over 2004.

Last year, large quantities of marijuana were grown on public lands across the state. Grows are sometimes near ten thousand plants in size, covering multiple acres of land. Often public lands are devastated by the clearing of trees and brush, terracing of the land, and diversion of natural springs and creeks to water plants. Additional large camps are often built utilizing the timber in the area and large amounts of trash are left behind each year. The illegal hunting of wild game by those tending marijuana grows has been an ongoing issue, as well.

The propensity for the carrying of firearms by many who grow marijuana poses a risk to all who enjoy the vast public lands throughout Washington. With 396 weapons having been seized last season, it is feared that innocent hikers or hunters will inadvertently discover a grow and be confronted by armed criminals defending their operations. Should a citizen discover a growing operation, it is recommended citizens’ back out of the area quietly and contact local authorities immediately.

Many of the large grows are very sophisticated in nature and produce high quality marijuana, which ends up being sold in our local communities. Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) levels, which are responsible for the potency and effects of Marijuana intoxication, are increasing. Marijuana in the 1960’s averaged between 1 and 3 percent THC content. THC levels in recent years routinely range between 10 and 25 percent.

Marijuana is the number one drug other than alcohol, for which treatment is sought nationally. Washington currently ranks 14th highest in the Nation, with 161 requests for treatment per 100,000 population according to the U.S. Department of Health.

Troopers trained as Drug Recognition Experts continue to find Marijuana as the primary cause of impairment among drivers tested. Thirty-five percent of DUI arrests for drug impairment involve Marijuana.

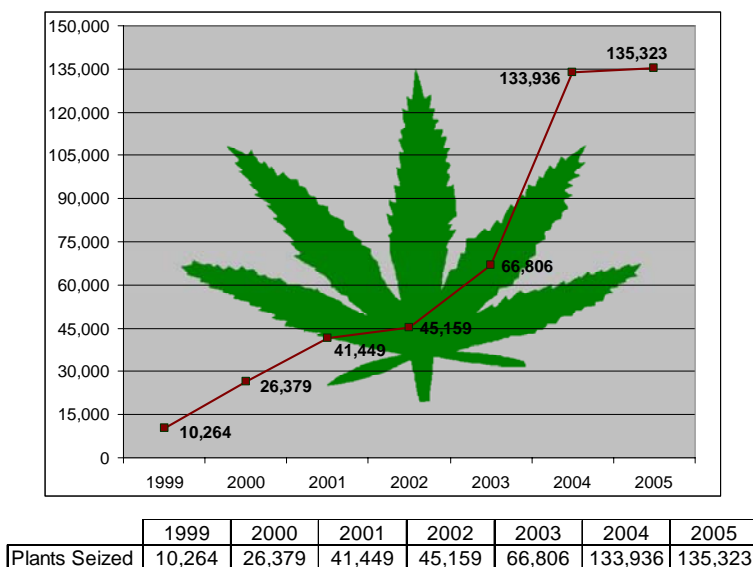
The Washington State Patrol (WSP) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) oversee the Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program (DCE/SP), which is tasked with removing domestically grown marijuana throughout the state. The program targets both indoor and outdoor grown Marijuana and those who grow it. Law enforcement made 412 arrests and recovered 394 weapons during eradication efforts in 2005.

The Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program grant provides primarily overtime monies and equipment to select counties throughout the state to conduct eradication efforts. City, county, state, and federal officers frequently utilize DEA and Army ? National Guard helicopters, to fly in likely growing areas, to spot grows. Narcotics units on the ground conduct follow-up investigation, making arrests when possible and removing the plants for destruction.

Washington also has received funding through the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program (HIDTA), and National Marijuana Initiative. This initiative funds the investigation of drug trafficking organizations involved in the domestic production of marijuana, and is distributed to multi-jurisdictional drug task forces statewide.

The WSP maintains a hotline where tips reference marijuana grows can be given to law enforcement. Citizens can remain anonymous and be paid up to \$5,000 dollars depending on the number of plants discovered. The Marijuana Hotline number is 1-800-388-GROW. For more information about the Marijuana Hotline program, please contact Lieutenant Richard A. Wiley, Narcotics Section at (509) 353-2964 or (360) 507-0453.

Seven Year Marijuana Growing Trend



Law enforcement throughout Washington continues to do an outstanding job with the resources and support of DEA and Northwest HIDTA to address the domestic production of Marijuana in Washington State.